

Message Text

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42

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FOR ARA/LA/MRSD

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, CI

SUBJECT: VISIT OF CHILEAN UNION LEADERS

1. EDUARDO RIOS ARIAS, PRESIDENT OF THE MARITIME CONFEDERATION OF CHILE (COMACH), AND ERNESTO VOGEL RODRIGUEZ, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION OF RAILROAD INDUSTRIAL WORKERS (FIFCH), WILL BE TRAVELLING TO WASHINGTON AT THE INVITATION AND EXPENSE OF THE AFL-CIO TO ATTEND A COURSE OF LATIN AMERICAN TRADE UNION LEADERS. RIOS AND VOGEL PLAN TO LEAVE SANTIAGO BY BRANIFF OCTOBER 16 ARRIVING IN WASHINGTON MORNING OCTOBER 17.

2. COMMENT: EDUARDO RIOS IS THE RECOGNIZED LEADER OF THE GROUP OF 13 CHILEAN LABOR LEADERS CALLED THE "DINAMICOS." THESE LEADERS ARE CRITICAL OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S LABOR POLICIES AND REPRESENT SOME OF THE FEW PRO-DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATIONS STILL FUNCTIONING IN CHILE. THE "DINAMICOS" BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE STILL AT LIBERTY AND OPERATING BECAUSE OF AN UMBRELLA OF PROTECTION AGAINST GOC ACTION GIVEN THEM BY THE AFL-CIO THROUGH THE AIFLD INSTITUTE. THE "DINAMICOS" ARE NOW UPSET BY WHAT APPEARS TO THEM TO BE A DIMUNUTION OF THAT PROTECTION BECAUSE AIFLD, WITH EMBASSY APPROVAL, HAS BROADENED ITS BASE TO INCLUDE SEMINARS FOR UNIONS SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT. THEY APPARENTLY REGARD THIS AS A CHANGE IN AIFLD POLICY WHICH SIGNIFIES TO THEM A LESSENING OF AFL-CIO COMMITMENT

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TO ASSIST THE SURVIVAL OF THE DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION

TRADITION, WHICH THEY REPRESENT. FOR OUR PART, WE BELIEVE THAT CONTACT WITH GOVERNMENT SUPPORTING UNIONS OPENS THE CHANCE TO EDUCATE THEM ABOUT FREE TRADE UNION CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES. MORE IMPORTANTLY, A PROGRAM LIMITED TO UNIONS SEEN BY THE GOVERNMENT AS OPPONENTS WILL ONLY RESULT IN THE EVENTUAL DEMISE OF AIFLD'S CHILEAN PROGRAM.

3. US AND AFL-CIO POLICY TOWARD THE CHILEAN LABOR MOVEMENT IS AT A DELICATE JUNCTURE. TO MAINTAIN AN AIFLD PRESENCE IN CHILE, WITH THE ATTENDANT CAPABILITY TO HELP SUSTAIN A FREE DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION TRADITION, AIFLD MUST BROADEN ITS PROGRAMMING. HOWEVER, THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT THE "DINAMICOS" WILL DRAW AWAY FROM AIFLD IF IT DOES SO. THIS IS NOT LIKELY. RIOS AND THE OTHER "DINAMICOS" RECOGNIZE THAT THEY REALLY HAVE NO PLACE ELSE TO GO -- AND WITHOUT THE BACKING OF THE AFL-CIO AS MANIFESTED THROUGH AIFLD, THE GOC WILL FEEL FREE TO MOVE AGAINST THE LAST REMAINING INDEPENDENT TRADE UNIONS. WHAT ARE NEEDED AT THIS POINT ARE HIGH LEVEL REASSURANCES TO THE DINAMICOS THAT THEY STILL ENJOY THE SUPPORT OF THE US LABOR MOVEMENT.

4. RIOS TOLD LABATT THAT HE IS GOING TO WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS THE CHILEAN SITUATION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF AIFLD AND AFL-CIO AND WILL REQUEST A MEETING WITH GEORGE MEANY.

5. THE EMBASSY HOPES THE DEPARTMENT CAN FOLLOW RIOS' AND VOGEL'S CONSULTATIONS WITH AFL-CIO AND INFORM US OF THE RESULTS OF THE MEETINGS.
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